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Two Eighteenth-Century Treatises (at Mexico City) On Instrumental Music*

Juan José Escorza and José Antonio Robles-Cahero

THE YEAR 1981 SAW the fortunate discovery of two sources that help clarify the still cloudy panorama of Neo-Hispanic music. Two important treatises, both already known abroad, turned up in Mexico City—another manuscript copy of Juan Antonio Vargas y Guzmán's *Explicacion para tocar la guitarra de punteado, por musica o cifra y reglas vtiles para acompañar con ella la parte del bajo* (Veracruz, 1776) and Joseph de Torres Martínez Bravo's printed *Reglas generales de acompañar, en organo, clavicordio, y harpa, con solo saber cantar la parte, ò un baxo en canto figurado* (Madrid: Imprenta de música, 1702).

The first, known previously in a manuscript copy belonging to the Newberry Library at Chicago [see *National Union Catalog*, Vol. 630, p. 173], was found by the authors of this note at the Archivo General de la Nación (AGN) among unclassified materials. The second was bought for their personal collection by the present authors from Librería Montes (Avenida Cuauhtémoc No. 79). News of the existence of the Newberry Library manuscript copy of Vargas y Guzmán's *Explicacion* had been signalled by Isabel Pope [Conant] before November of 1974. Robert Stevenson published in *Heterofonía*, VIII/44 (September–October 1975), pp. 14–16 and VIII/45 (November–December 1975), pp. 5–9, the first analytical study of the Vargas y Guzmán *Explicacion*, giving in his two-part article notice of its prime value.

The discovery of the Mexican AGN copy of the *Explicacion* would not have been so extremely significant but for the difference between the Newberry copy and that at the Archivo General de la Nación. That latter possesses, in addition to its theoretical content, 13 sonatas for guitar and continuo in perfect state of legibility. These make a most welcome addition to the slim Neo-Hispanic instrumental repertory known to date. Although no composer of these sonatas is explicitly named, they may quite possibly be by Vargas y Guzmán himself—until proved otherwise. In any event, the inalienable virtues of the *Explicacion* include the fact that it is the earliest extant guitar treatise written in New Spain (and even possibly the earliest written in the New World). The *Explicacion* is lucid, exhaustive, explicit, and fully documented throughout. The author separates himself from Santiago de Murcia (well known in Mexico) by strenuously arguing for pentagram notation (against ciphers). Not only does Vargas y Guzmán mention six- and seven-course guitars but also he gives their precise tunings and stringings. These advances place Vargas y Guzmán in the world-wide forefront of guitar treatise writers of his epoch.

*Translated from *Heterofonía* 84, pp. 63–64, with the kind permission of the distinguished *directora* of that premier Mexican publication, Esperanza Pulido Silva.

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The authorities quoted by Vargas y Guzmán in the *Explicacion* show how rich was the musical environment in which he flourished. Among others, he cites Francisco Correa de Arauxo, Gaspar Sanz, Joseph de Torres Martínez Bravo, Santiago de Murcia, and Pablo Minguet e Yrol. Since Joseph de Torres's *Reglas de acompañar* forms the theoretical basis of the second part of the *Explicacion* (Part 2 is dedicated to the guitar as an accompanying instrument), Torres may justly be called Vargas y Guzmán's most influential source. In view of Torres's influence, the finding of his *Reglas* in a Mexican bookshop should cause no surprise. Already in the early 1970's the large number of Torres's musical compositions extant in various Mexican archives had become common knowledge.

We anticipate that a future facsimile publication of the AGN *Explicacion*, accompanied by explanatory notes, will be a happy musicological event. In the meantime, we here offer facsimiles of the 13 sonatas closing the AGN copy, in the expectation that scholars in other lands will tell us if concordances elsewhere require their attribution to a composer other than Vargas y Guzmán. Eager as we are for these sonatas, along with the rest of Vargas y Guzmán's oeuvre, to shed beams of glory on Mexico alone, we have been recently forewarned of the perils involved in any premature patriotic outburst.

In Craig H. Russell's "Santiago de Murcia: The French Connection in Baroque Spain," *Journal of the Lute Society of America, Inc.*, XV (1982), 40–51, he encapsulated various findings first divulged in his two-volume Ph.D. dissertation, "Santiago de Murcia: Spanish Theorist and Guitarist of the Early Eighteenth Century," University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 1981. Despite the labor involved in all previous Murcia scholarship,[1] Russell showed that both Murcia's *Resumen de acompañar la parte con la guitarra* (engraved at Antwerp in 1714 but approved August 1, 1717, at Madrid) and his *Passacalles y obras de guitarra por todos los tonos naturales y acidentales* (1732) (British Library Add. 31650, purchased in Mexico by Julian Marshall) are "not primarily compendiums of original works but rather anthologies of the popular music of his day."[2]

[1]Elena Machado Lowenfeld, "Santiago de Murcia's Thorough-Bass Treatise for the Baroque Guitar (1714)," City University of New York, M.A. thesis, 1974; Neil Pennington, *The Spanish Baroque Guitar and a Transcription of de Murcia's "Passacalles y obras,"* 2 vols. (Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press, 1981).

[2]In Appendices 1a–c of his published article, Russell identifies Raoul-Anger Feuillet's *Recueil de dances* (Paris, 1700) as source of the eight selections at pages 57–64 of Murcia's *Resumen*; Feuillet's *Recueil de contredances mises en choréographie* (Paris, 1706) as source of items in Murcia's *Resumen* beginning at pages 66, 72, and 83–85; Feuillet's *Danses de Bal* and *Petits Recueils Annuels* of 1703 through 1713 as sources of items in the *Resumen* beginning at pages 57, 65–82, and 84. In Russell's footnote 6 he identifies "at least fourteen other contemporary Spanish sources" containing "the same Feuillet contredanses." He concludes footnote 6 with this observation: "the anonymous baroque guitar manuscript in the Biblioteca Nacional in Mexico City, Ms. 1560, contains many French contredanse settings (most of them from Murcia's *Resumen*)."

In Appendices 1d–g of his Lute Society article, Russell itemizes Murcia's indebtednesses to Robert de Visée's *Liure de gvitarre* (Paris, 1682) for allemandas beginning at pages 69 and 105 of *Passacalles y obras*; to Francesco Corbetta's *La guitarre royalle* (Paris, 1671) and *Varii scherzi* (1648) for items starting at folios 100, 121^{v}, 123, 123^{v} (some measures deleted), 125, 126^{v}; to François Campion's *Nouvelles decouvertes sur la guitarre* (Paris, 1705) for items starting at 82^{v}, 83^{v}, 84, 85^{v}, 85, 84, 90^{v}, 52, 53^{v}, 54, 116^{v}, 112, 124^{v}, 99, 99^{v}, 117^{v}, 118^{v}, 118, 111, 51^{v}, 52^{v}, 53, 71, and 112^{v}; and to François Le Cocq's unpublished "Recueil des pieces de guitarre" (1729) for items starting at 109, 95, 113^{v}, 94^{v}, 94, 77^{v}, 79, 81, 82, 105^{v}, 55^{v}, 57, 57^{v}, 56, and 56^{v}. Summarizing, Russell writes (p. 42): "Almost every dance movement" in Murcia's *Passacalles y obras* "has been borrowed from other sources."

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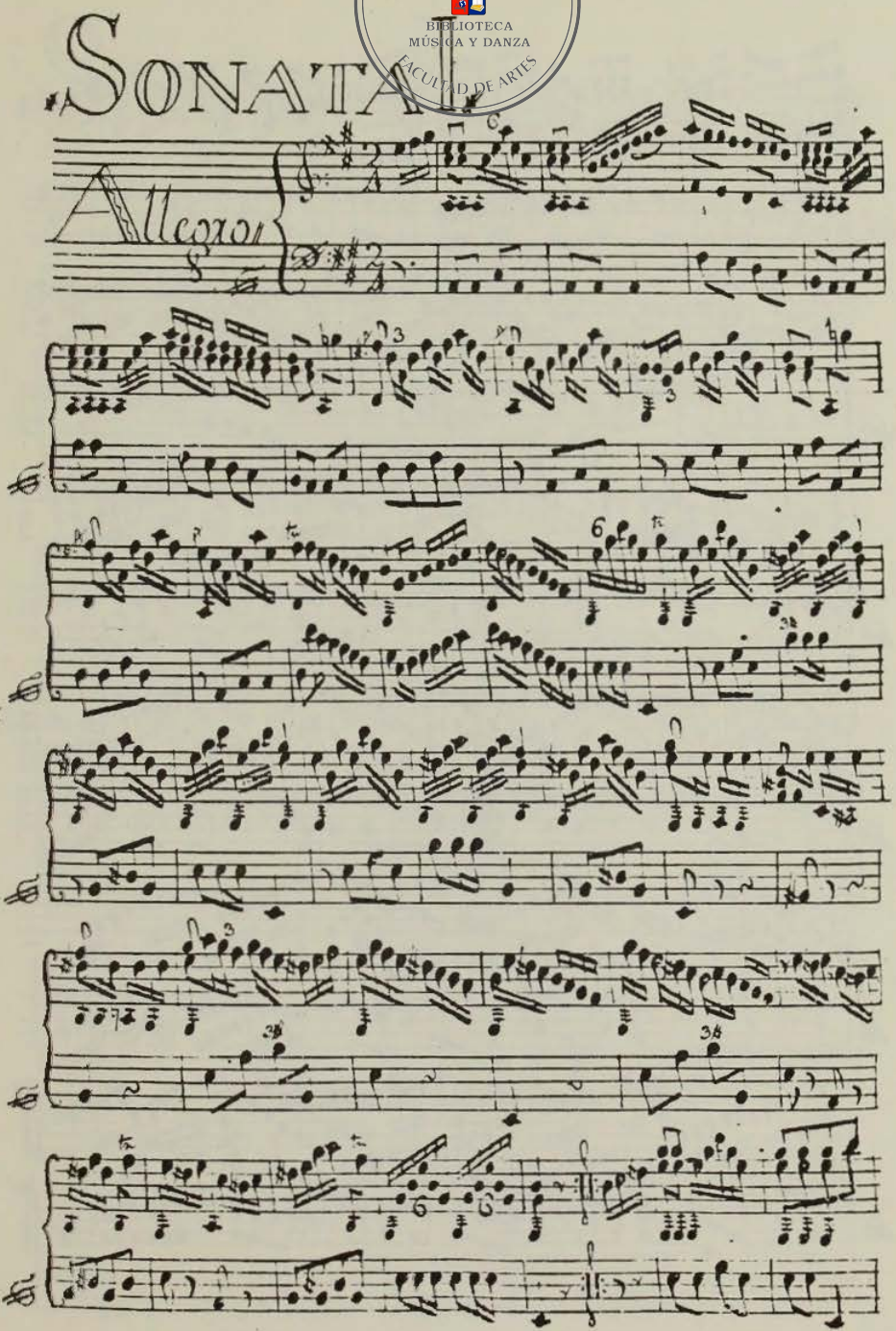

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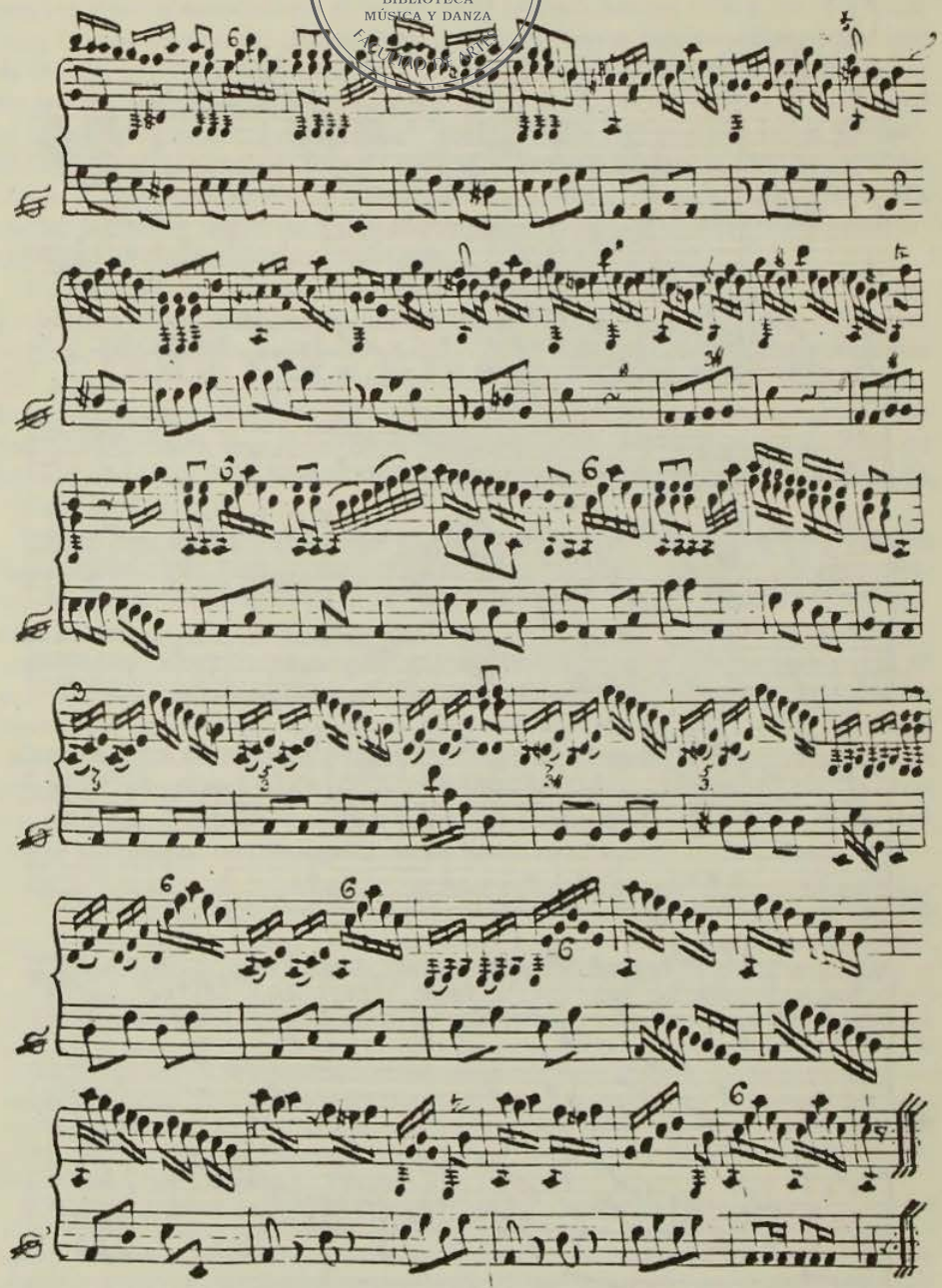

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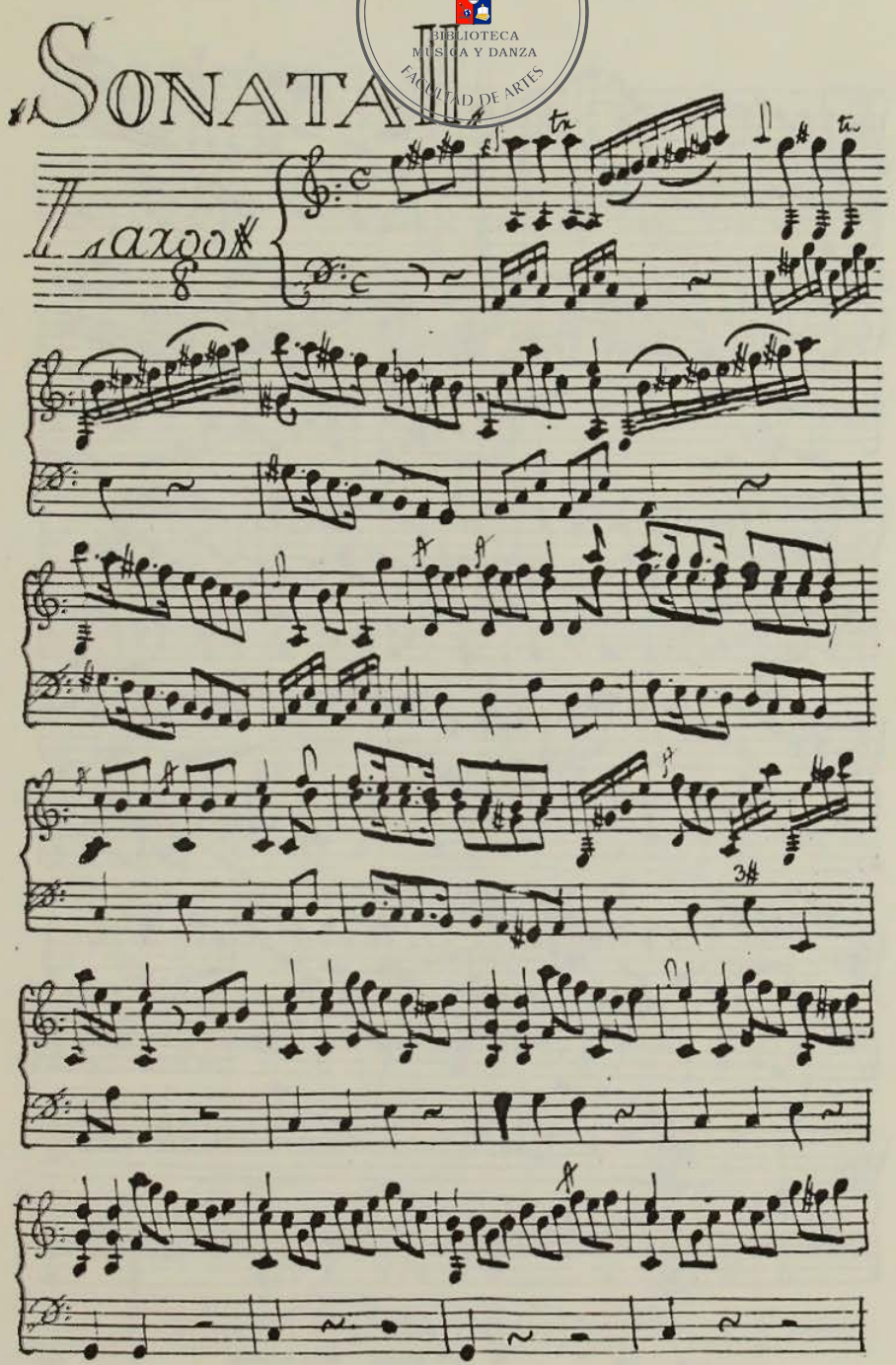

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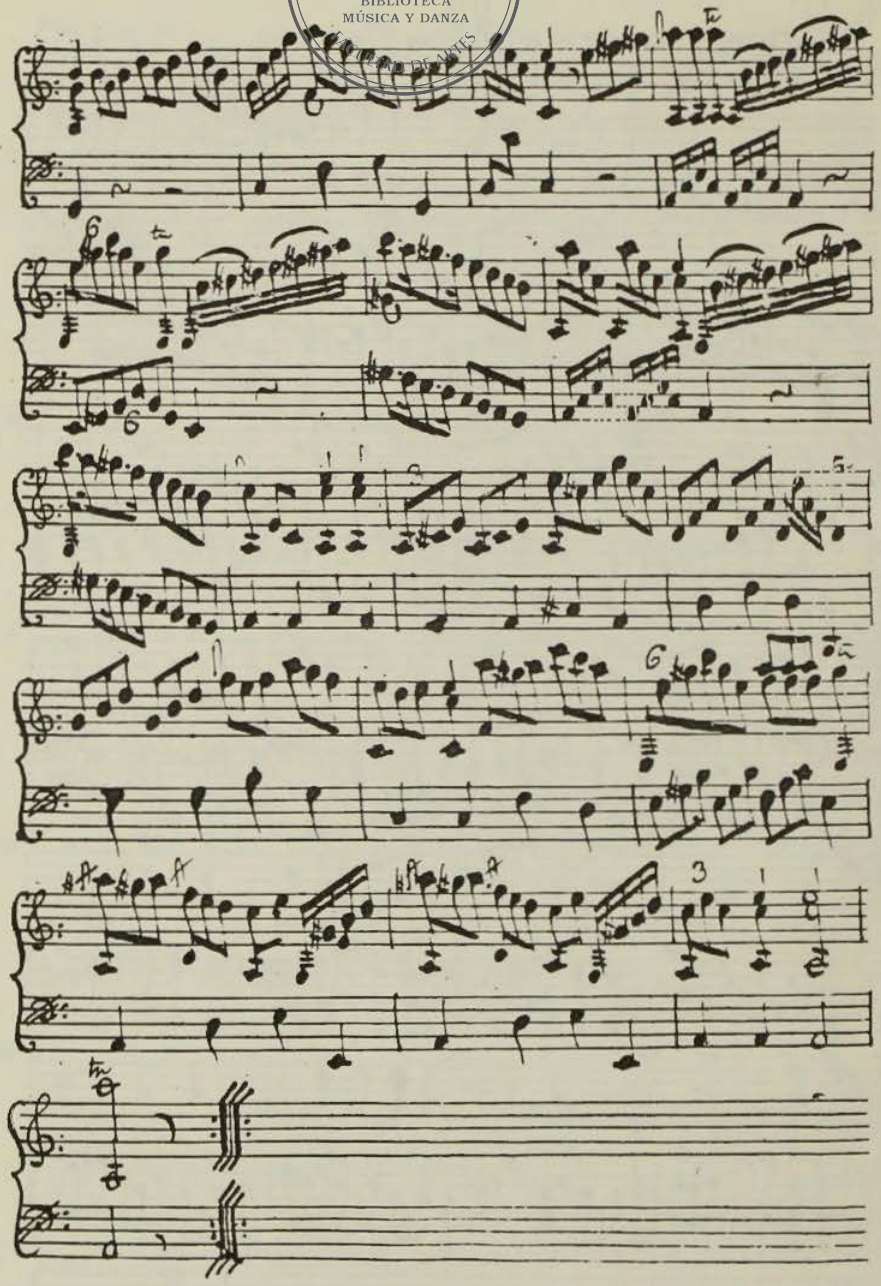

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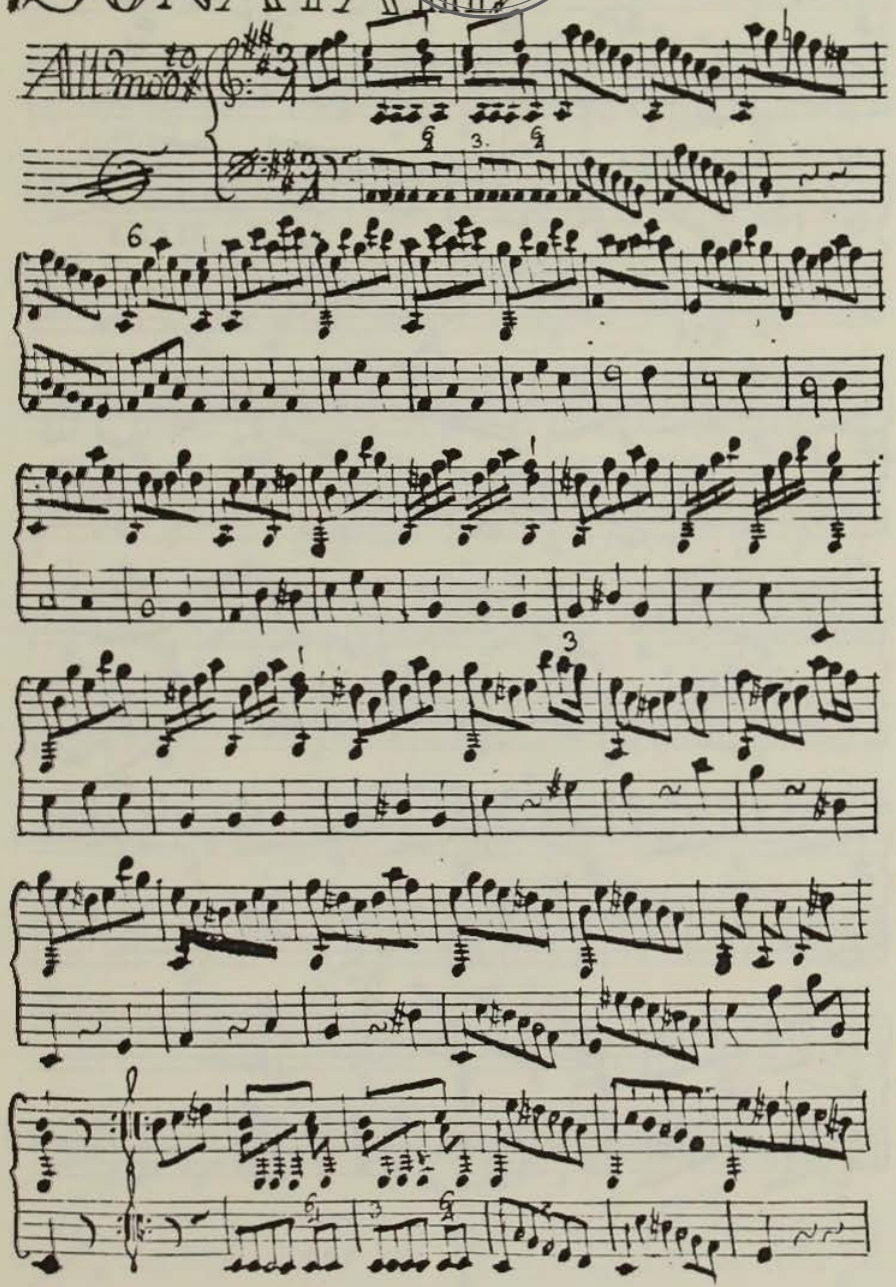
SONATA III



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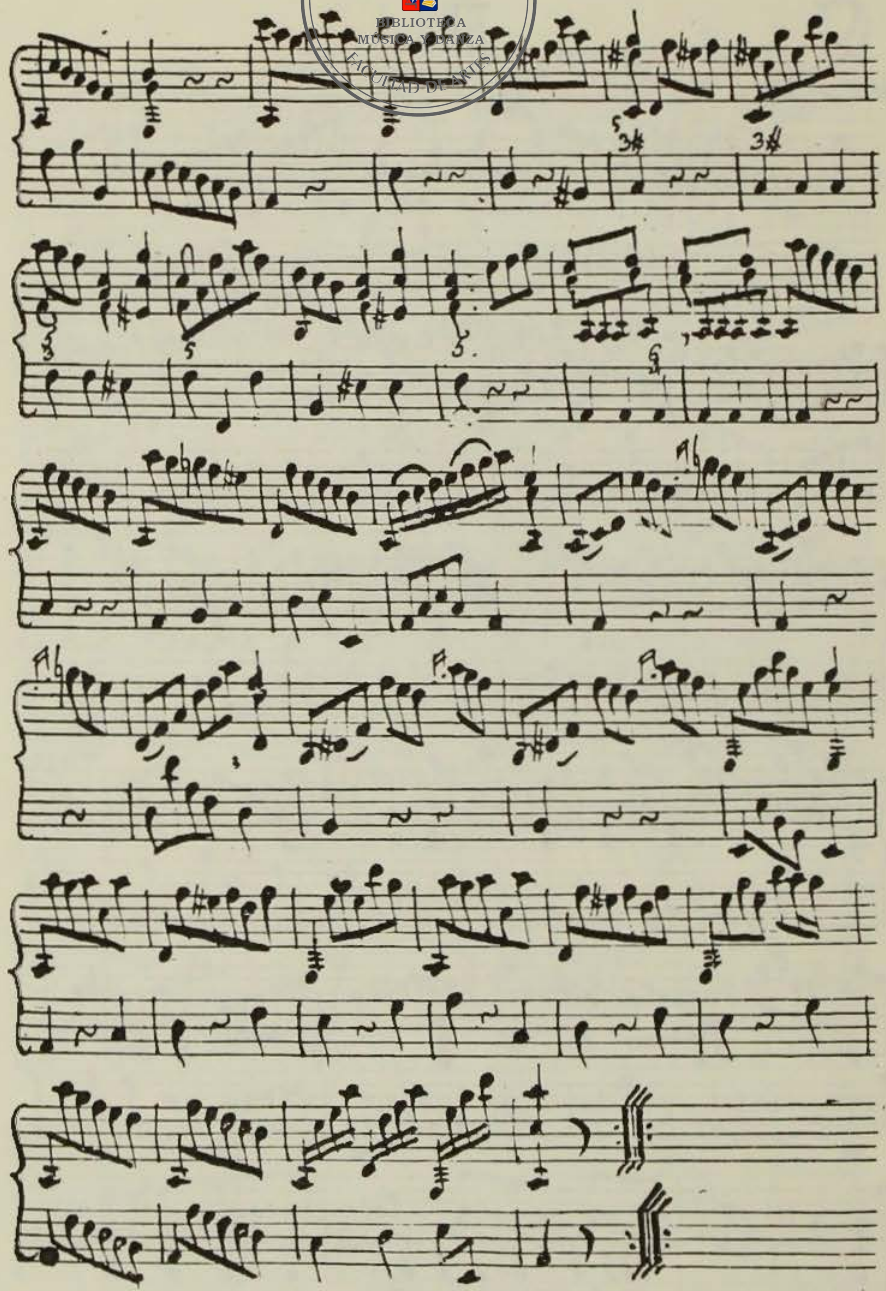

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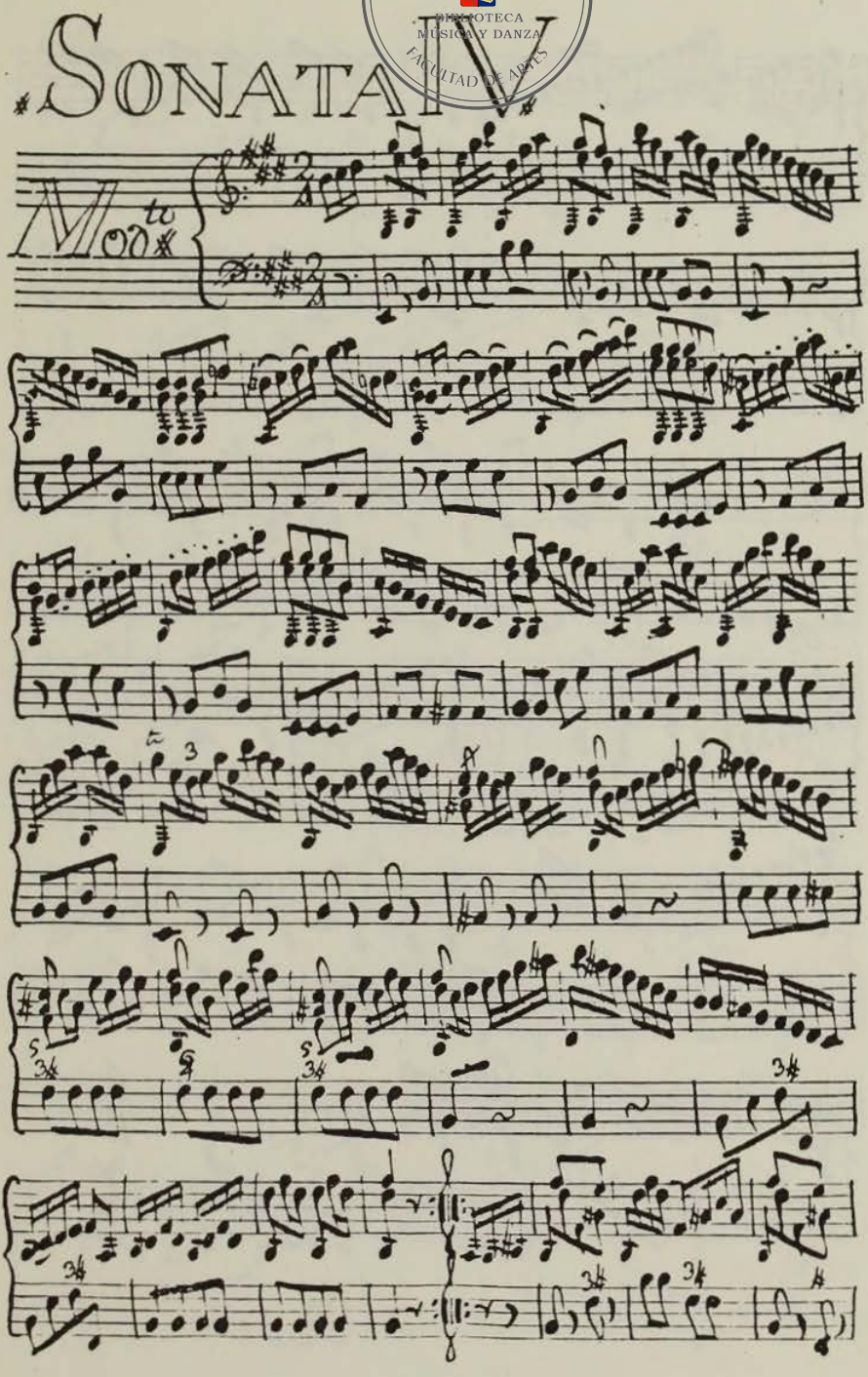

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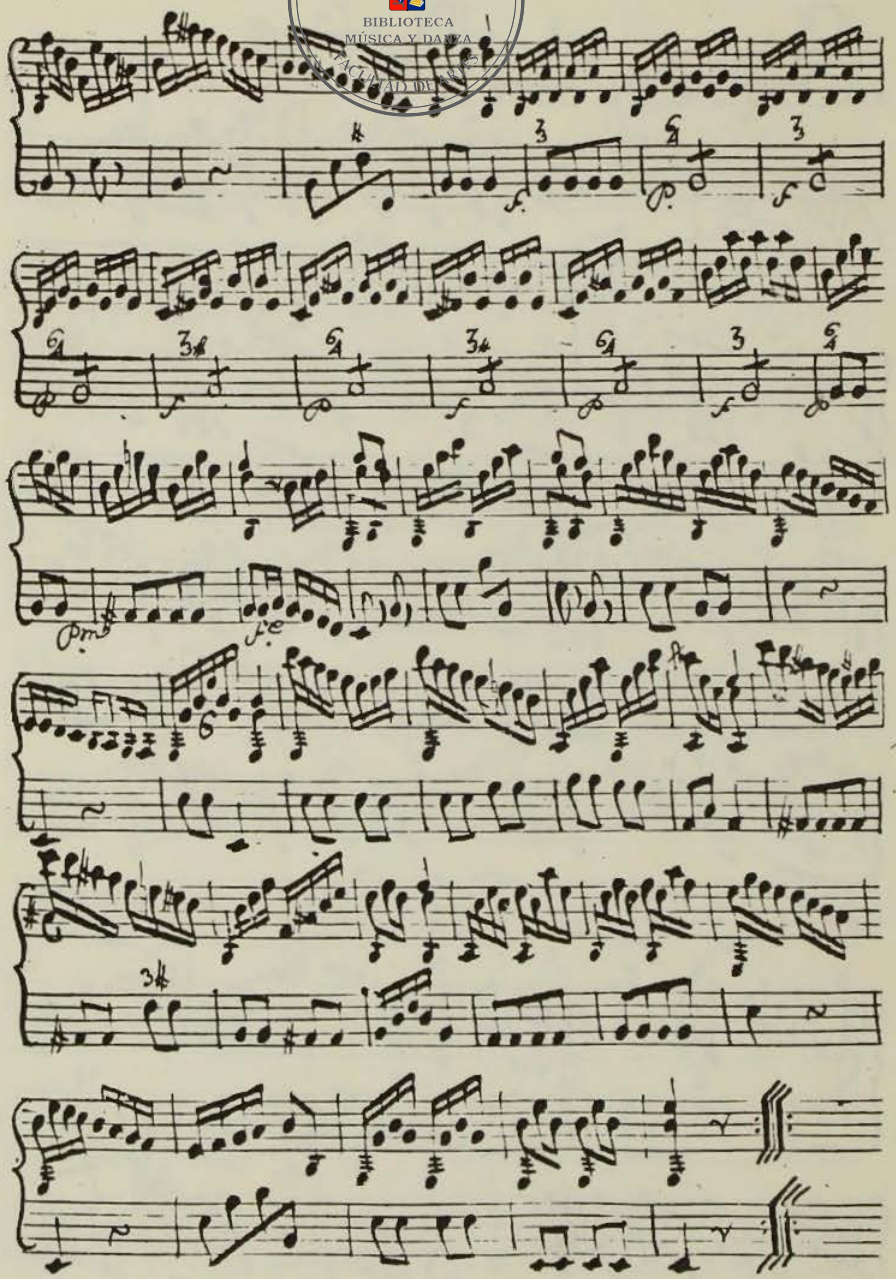

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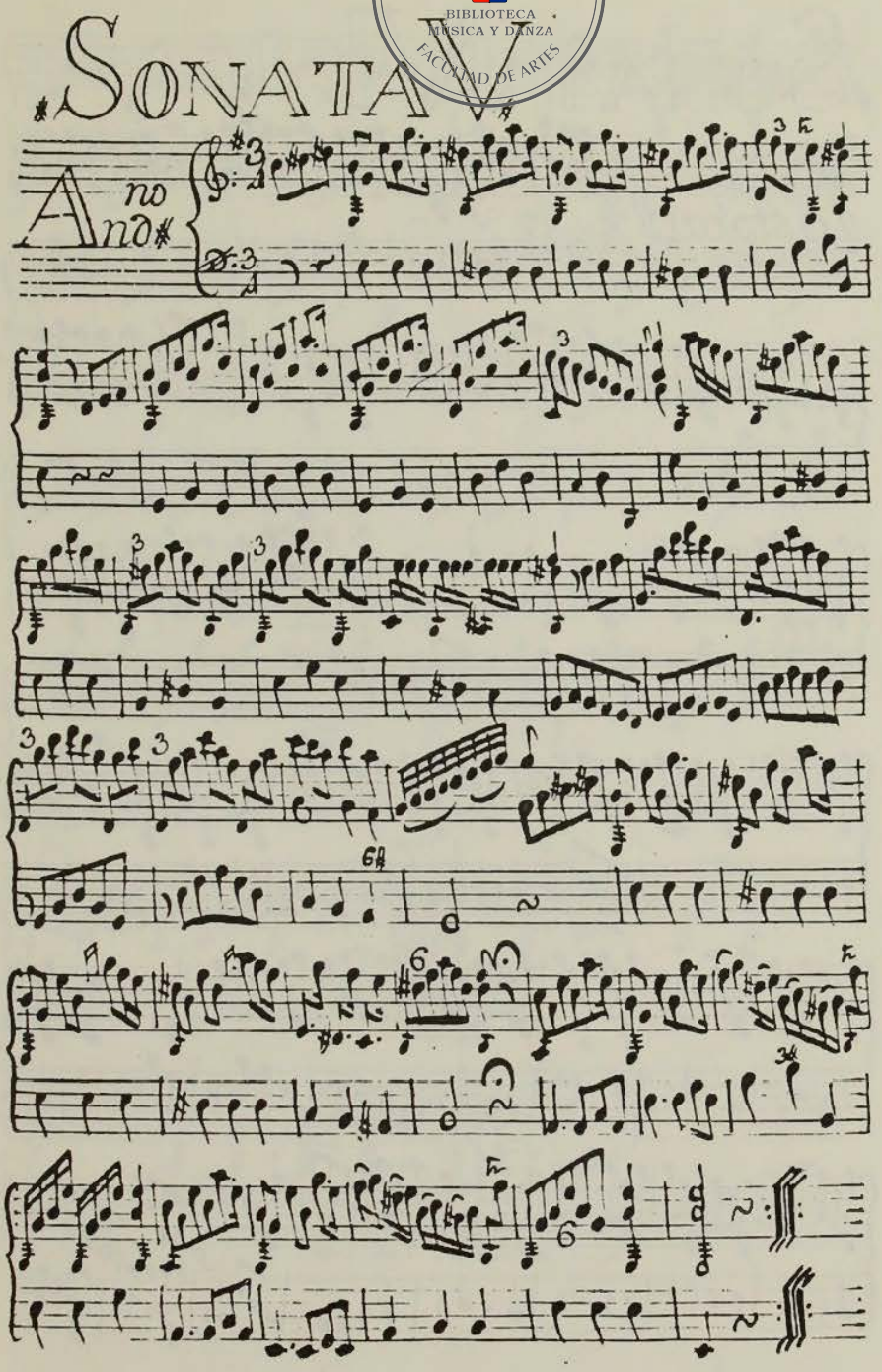

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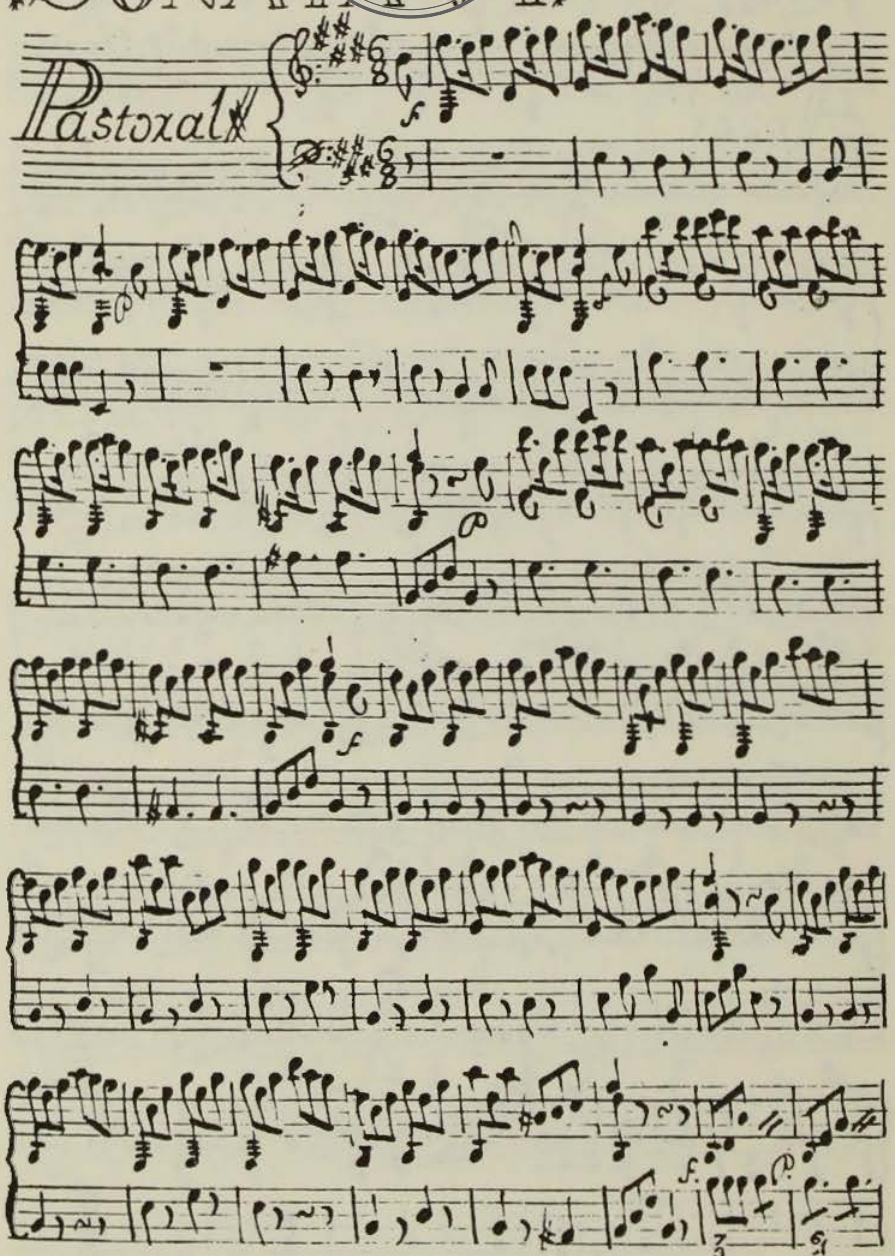

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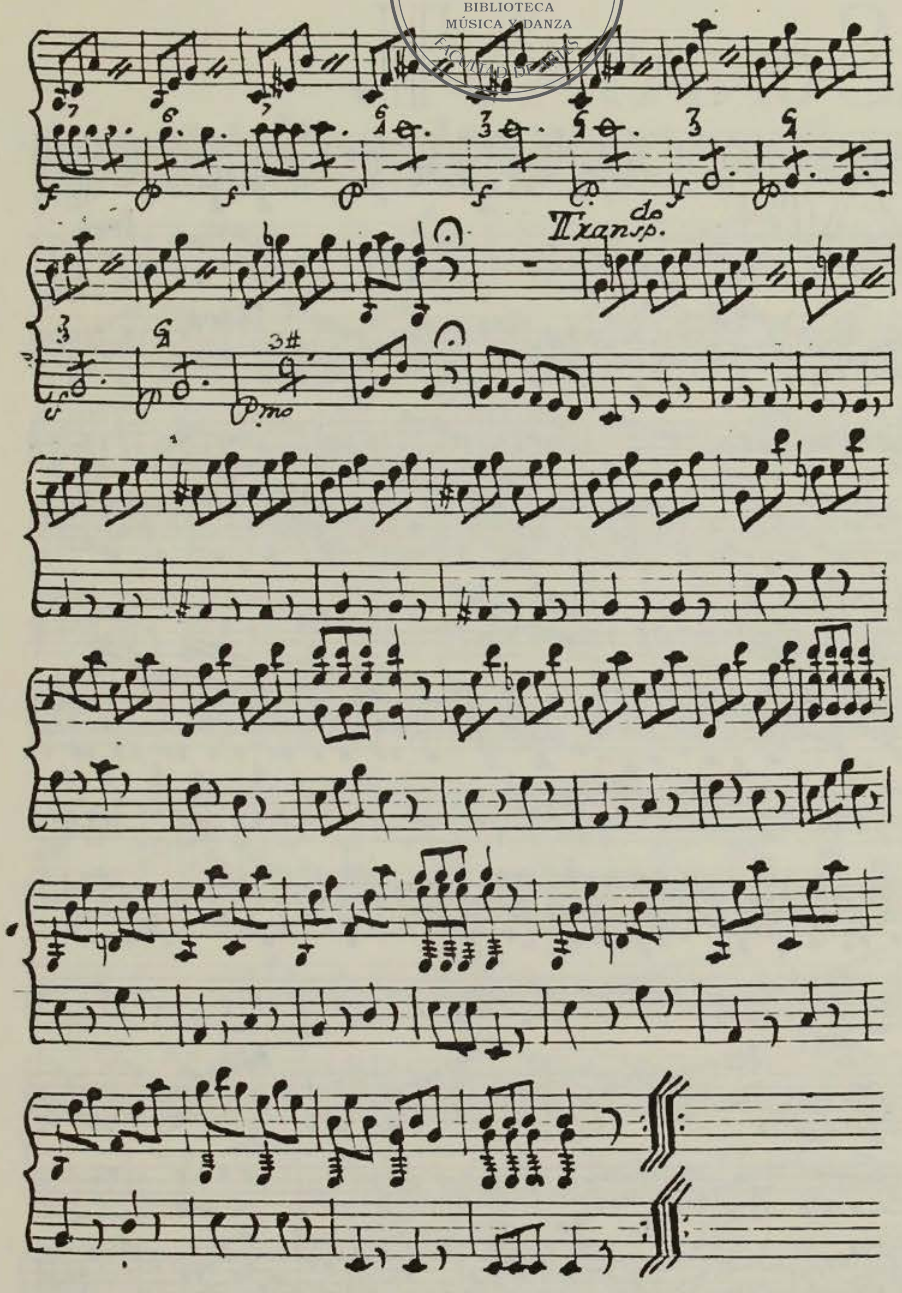

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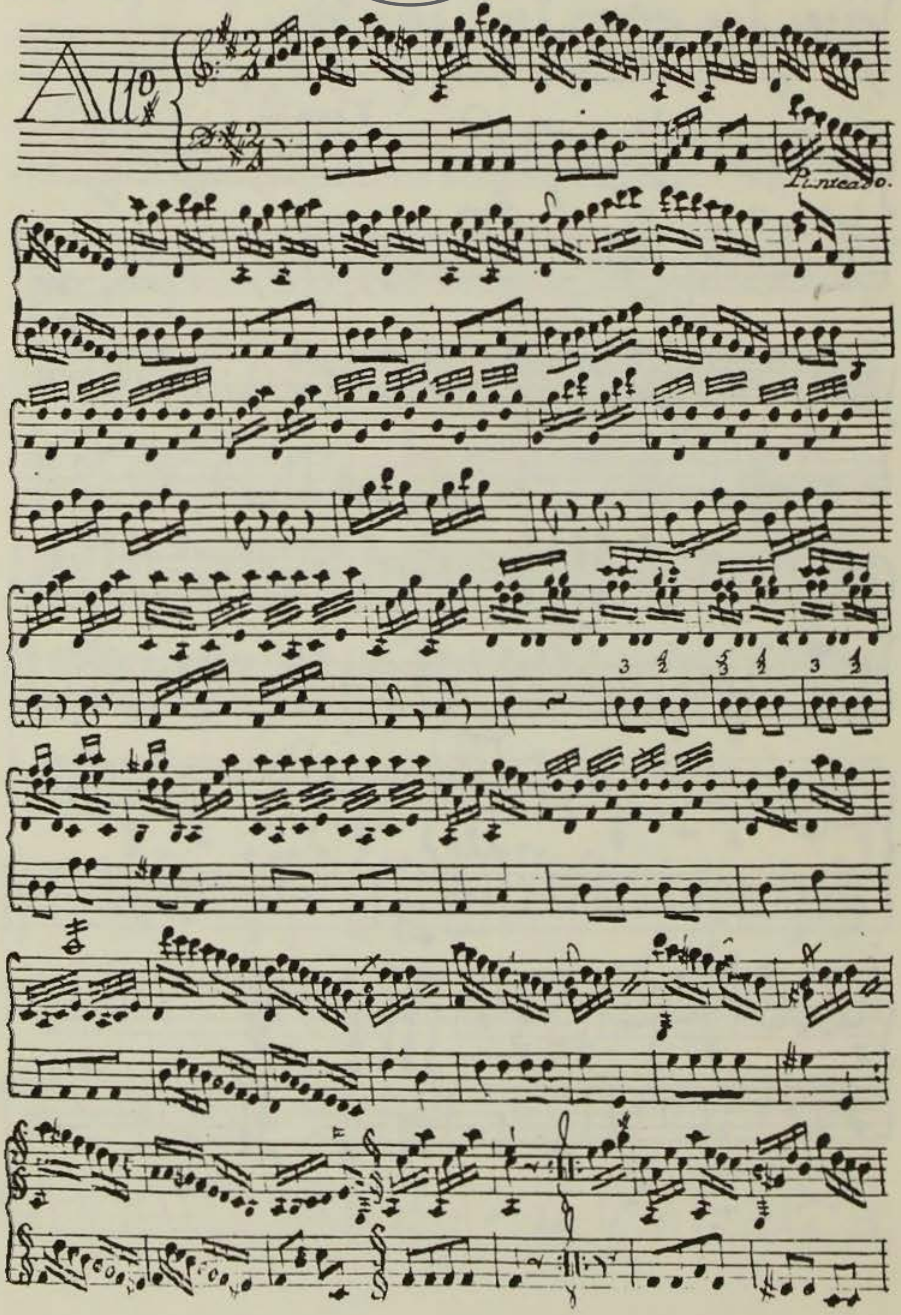

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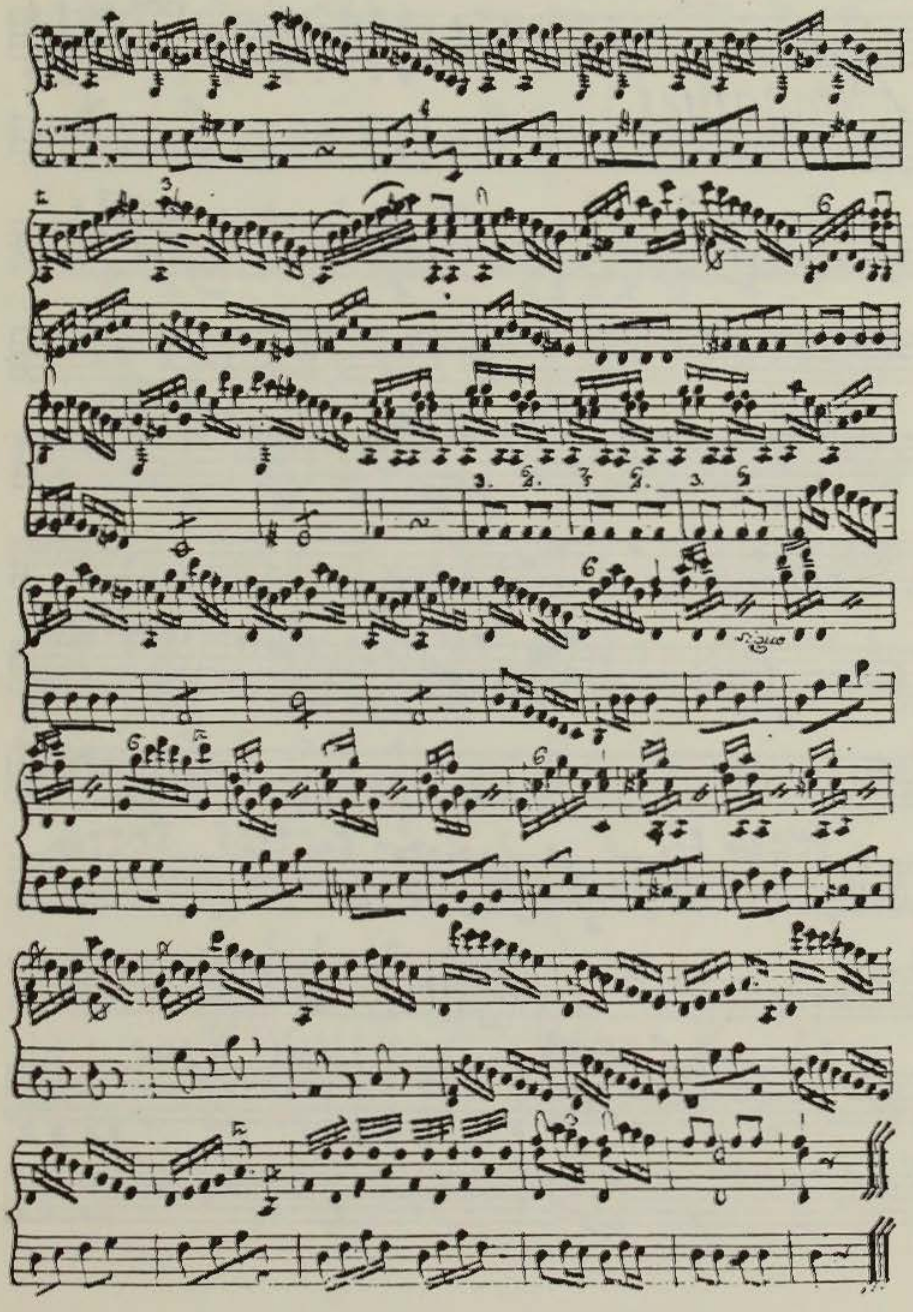

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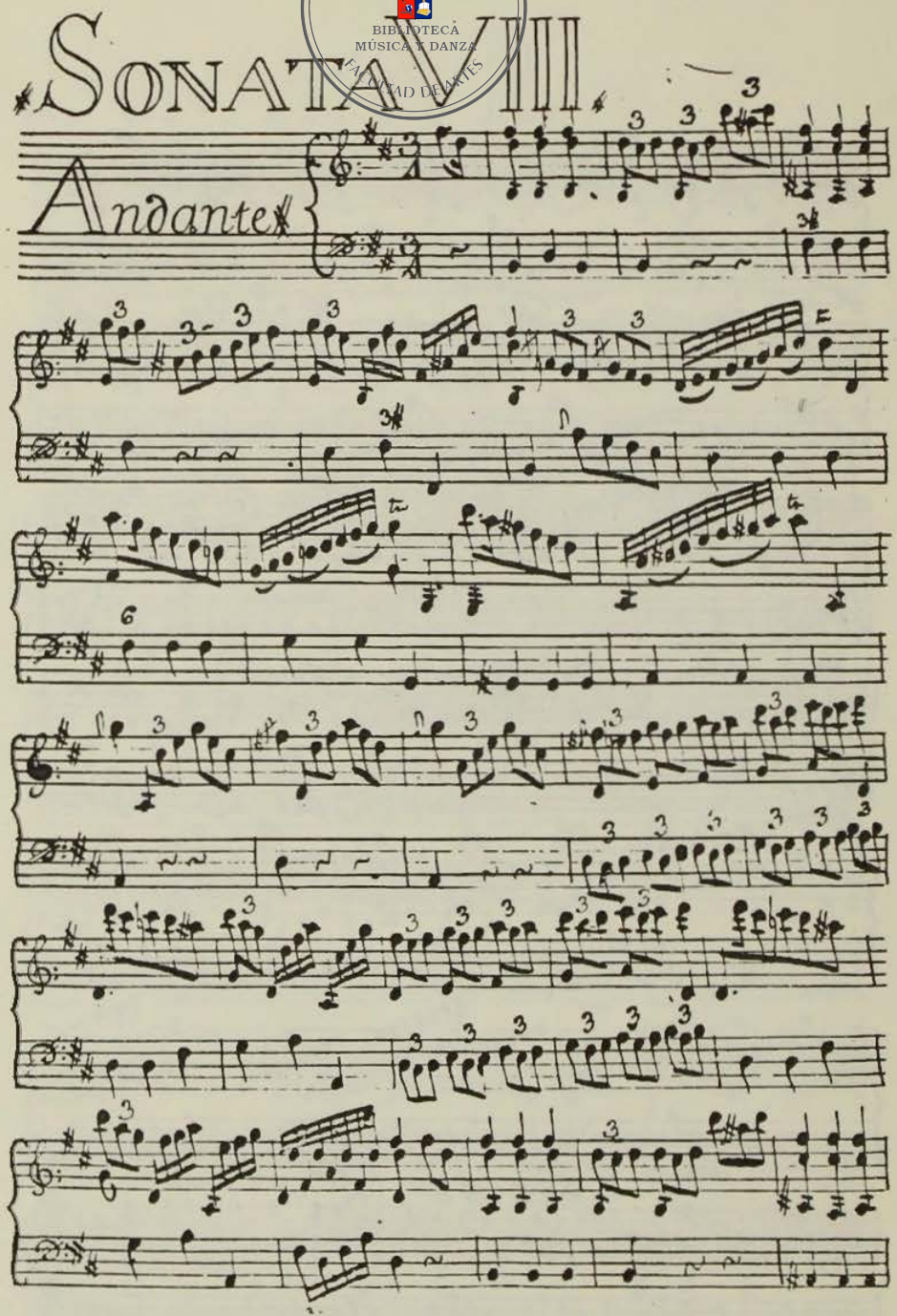

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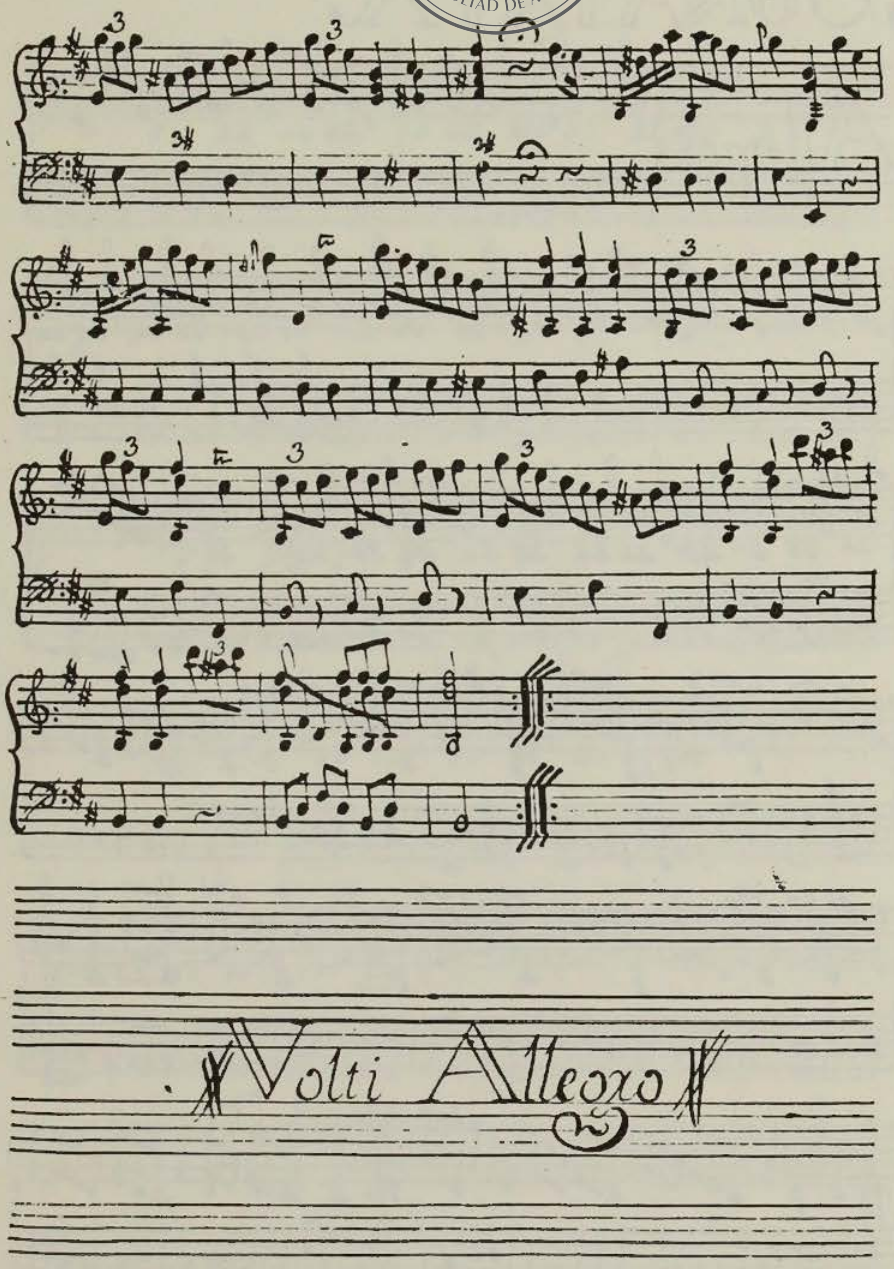

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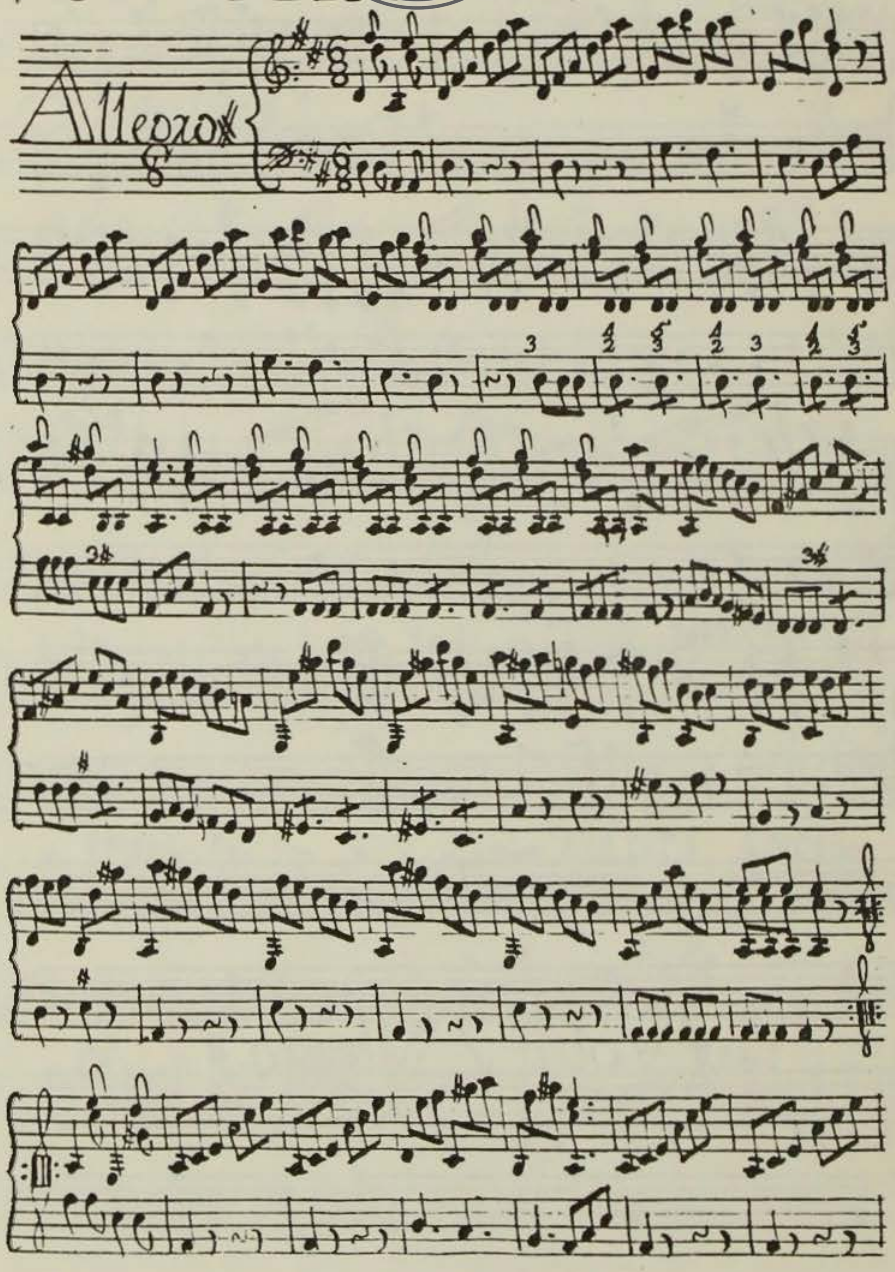

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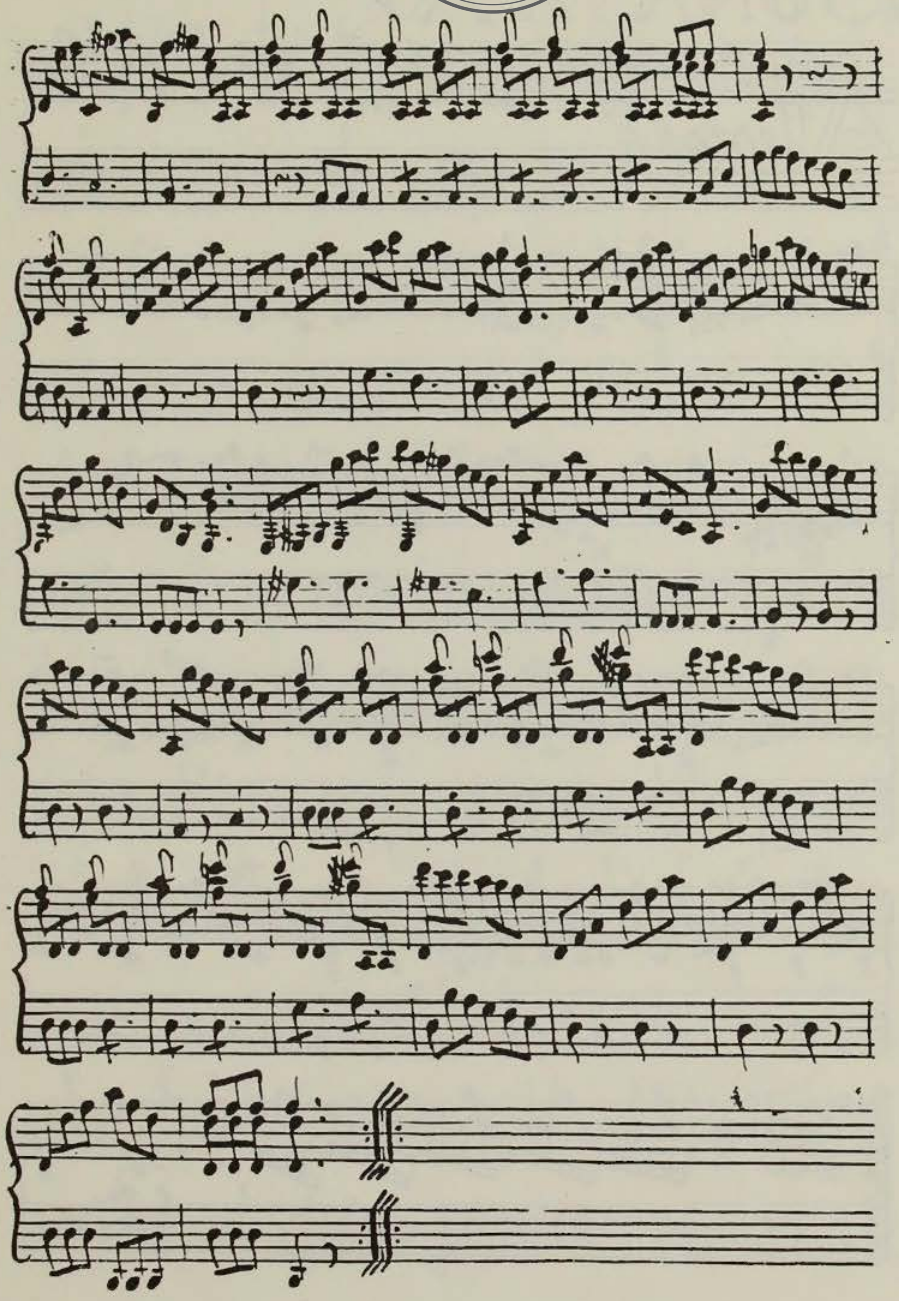

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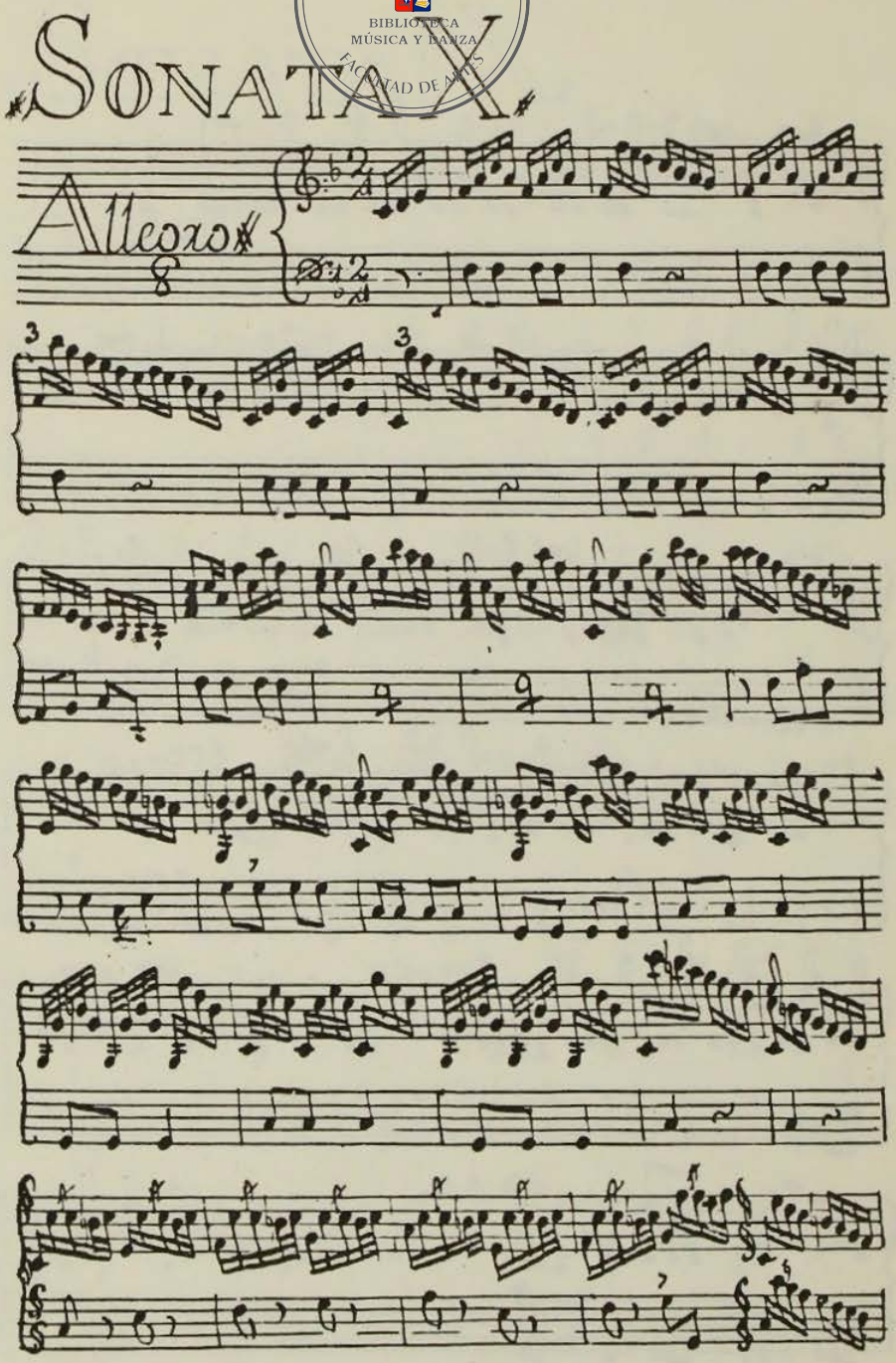

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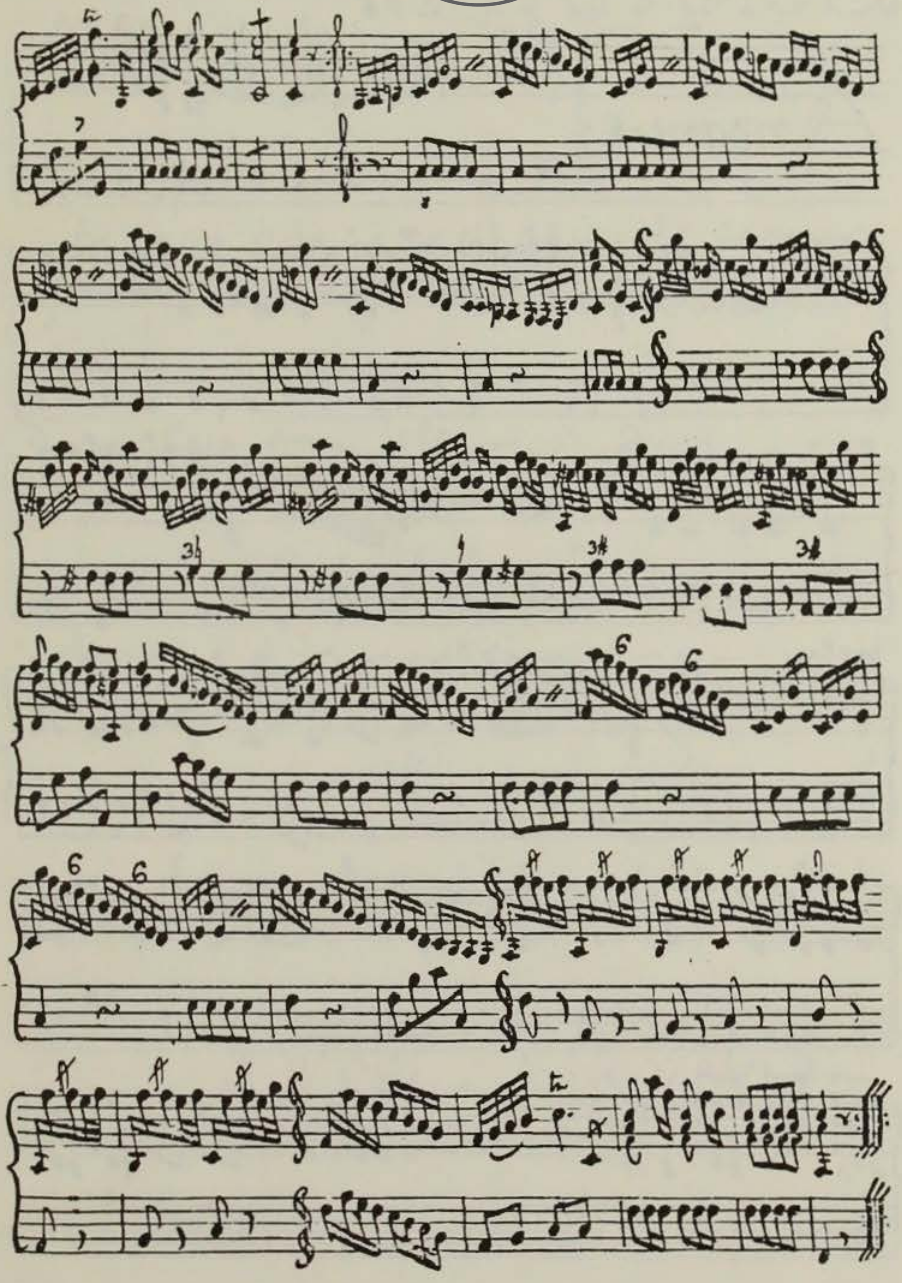

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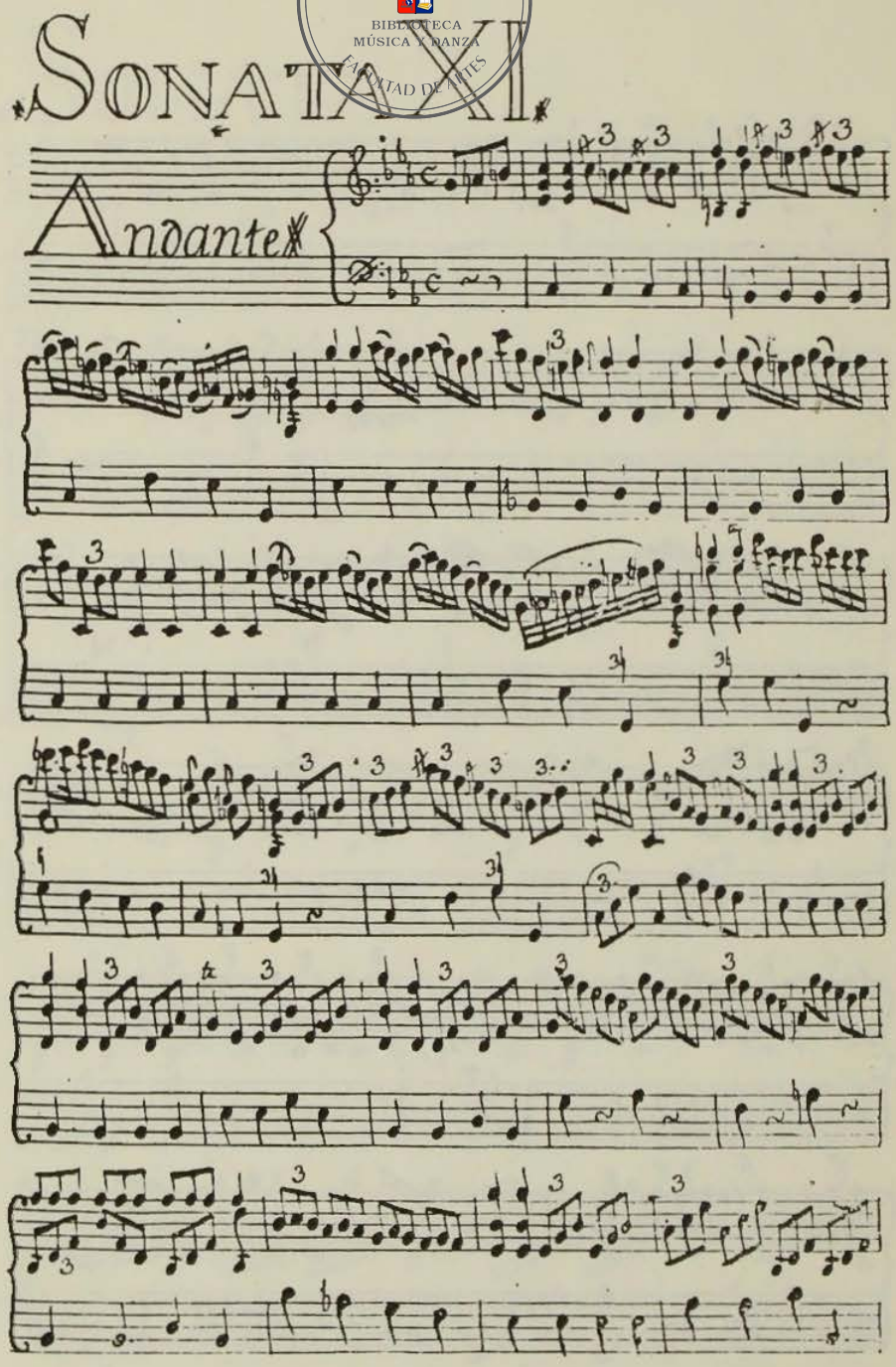

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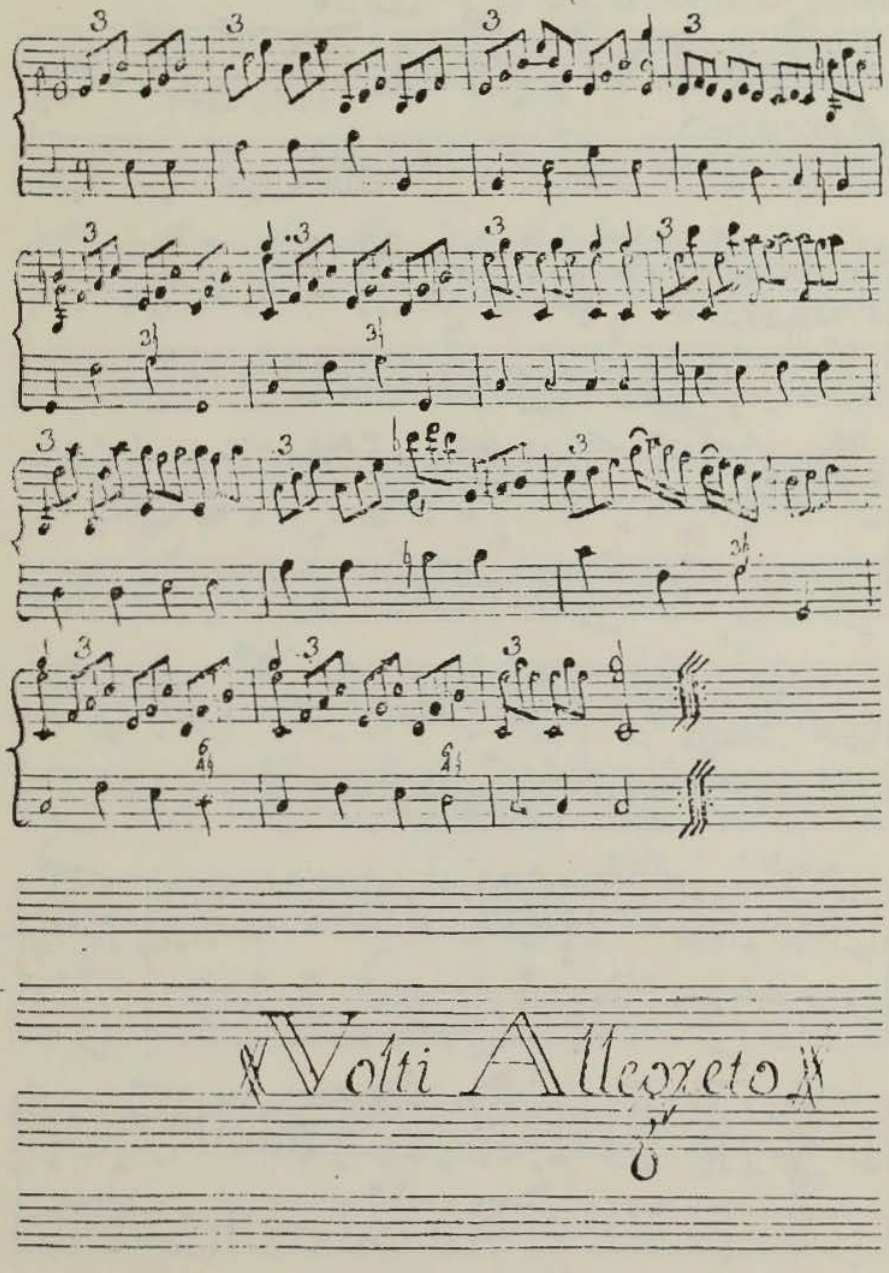

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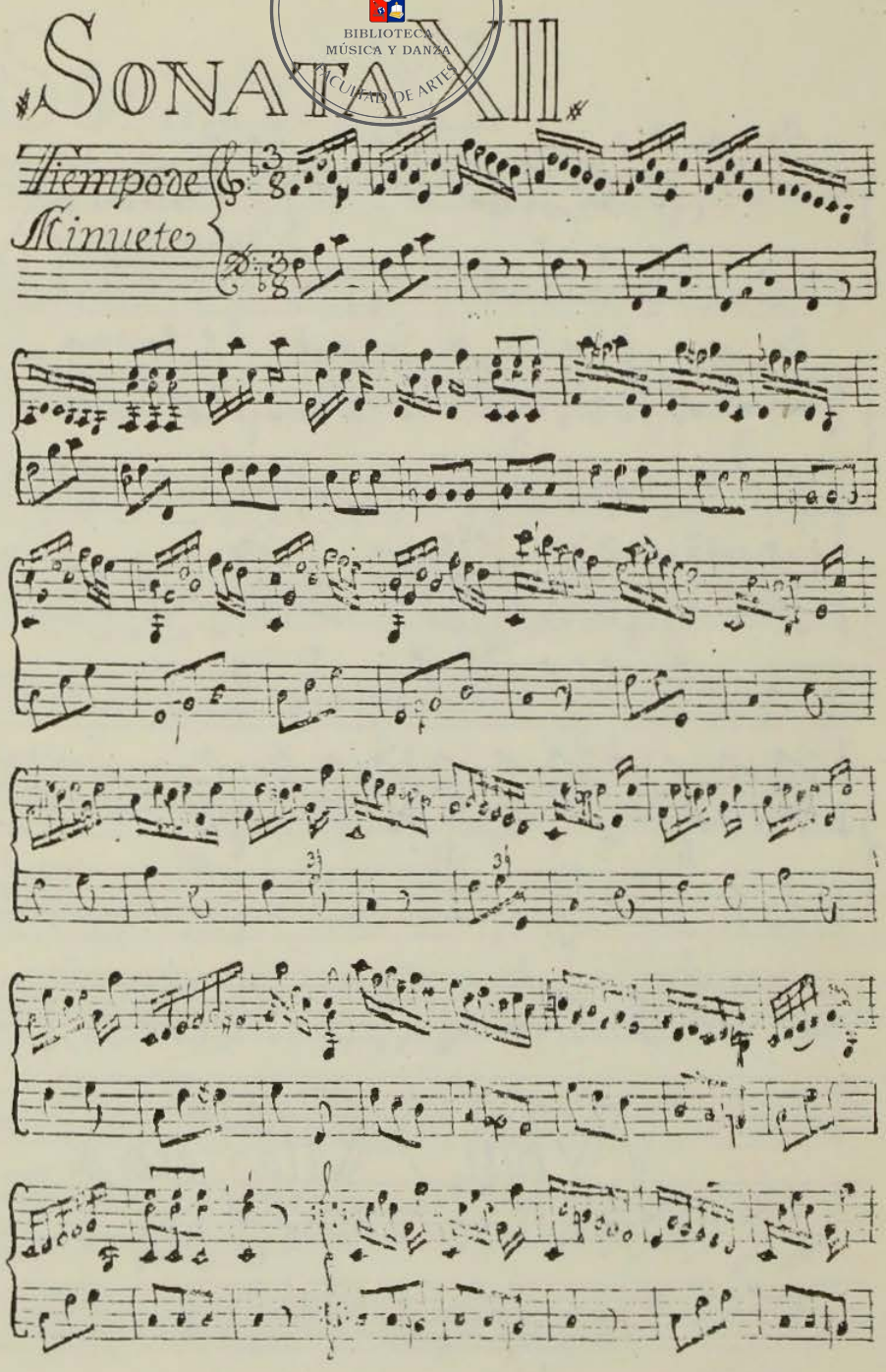

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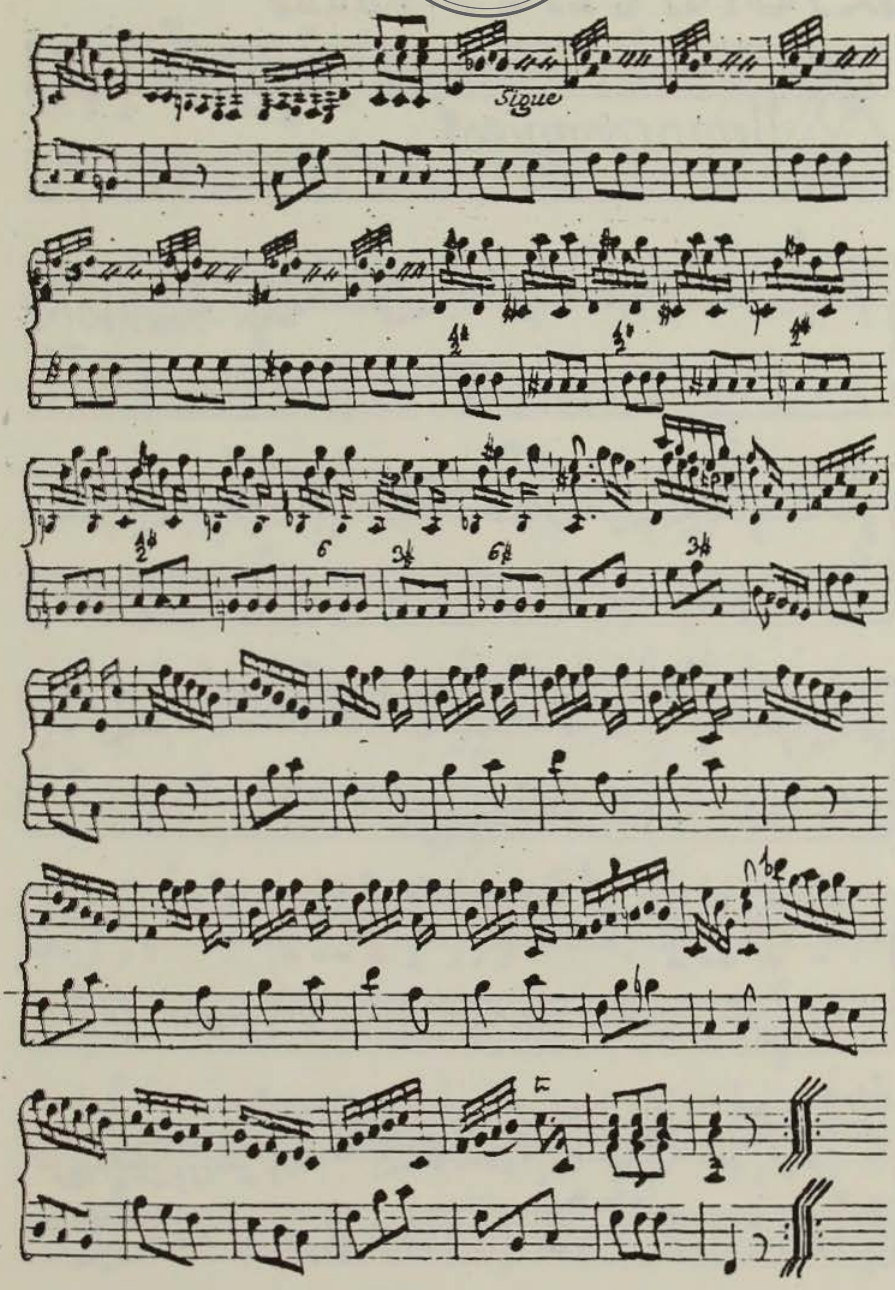

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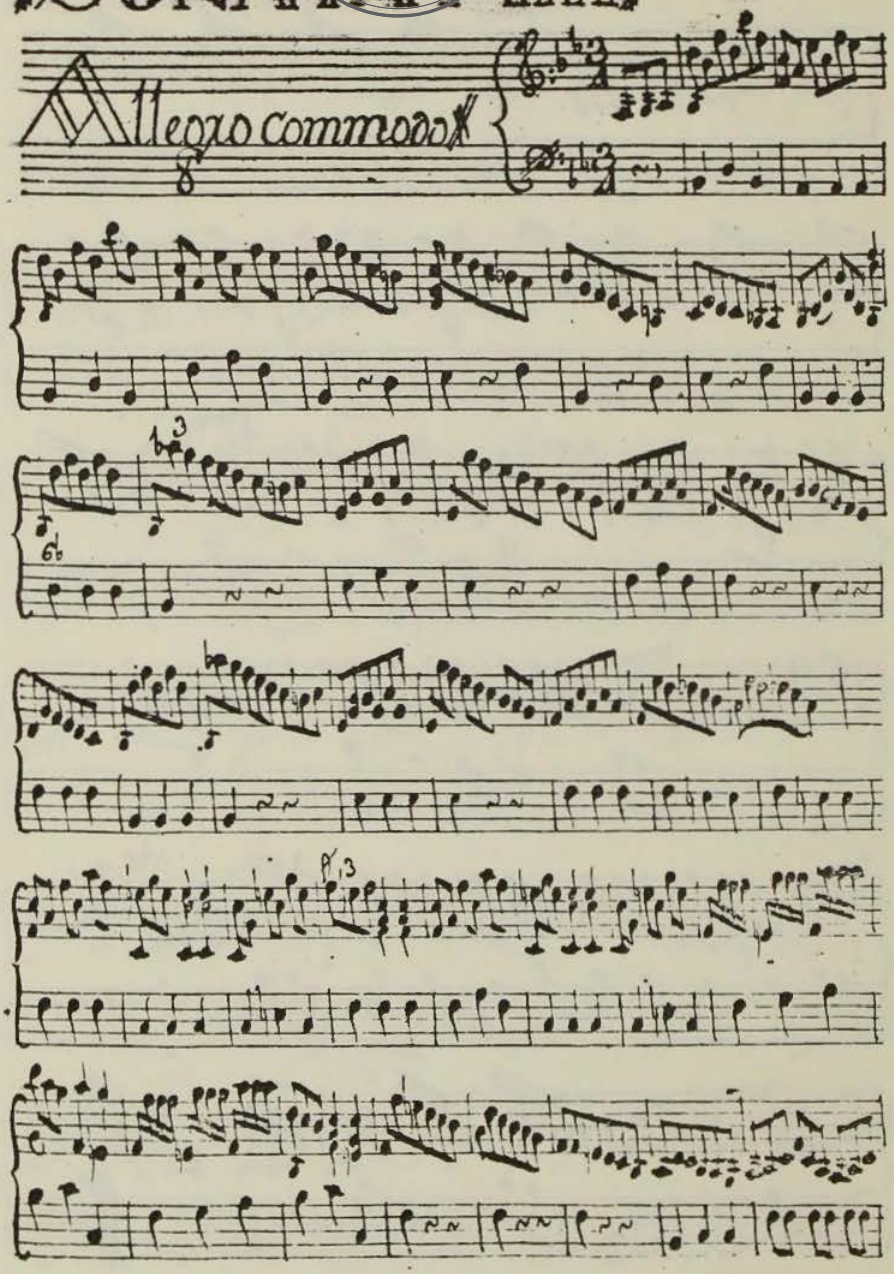
SONATA XIII



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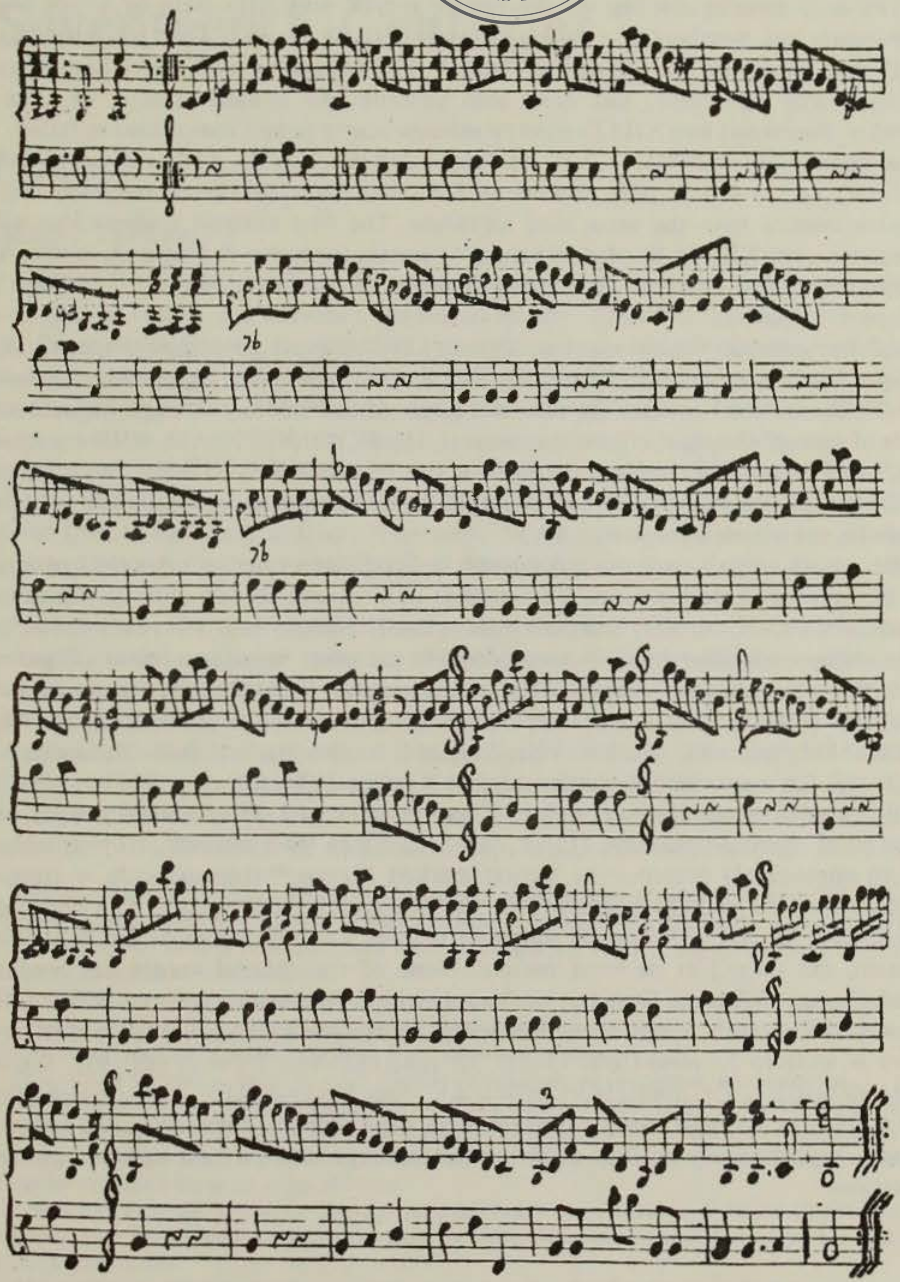

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COMMENTARY ON THE 13 AGN (FORMERLY MEXICAN ARCHIVO DE LA SECRETARÍA DE HACIENDA) SONATAS

The only sonatas starting on downbeats are IX and XII—both of which are apparently last members of a sonata triptych (VII–IX, X–XII). Only after sonatas VIII and XI comes the command "volti." The four sonatas X–XIII have flats in their key signatures, but none that precede. All sonatas except VI (*Pastoral* = *Pastorale*) and XII (*Tiempo de minuete*) carry tempo indications in Italian. Four sonatas are in 2/4 (I, IV, VII, X), four in 3/4 (III, V, VIII, XIII), two are in 6/8 (VI, IX), two in 4/4 (II, XI), and one in 3/8 (XII). Thus, no two immediately successive sonatas have the same time signature. The best analysis suggests that all sonatas except XIII (in B♭ Major) belong to sonata triptychs: A Major–A minor–A Major; E Major–E minor–E Major; D Major–B minor–D Major; F Major–C minor–F Major.

All five sonatas without repeated first and second parts go at slower speeds (II, *Largo*; V, *Andantino*; VI, [*Pastorale*]; VIII and XI, *Andante*). Except for the *Pastorale*, these slower sonatas are in minor keys. About halfway through the second part of each of the eight bipartite sonatas (I, III, IV, VII, IX, X, XII, XIII) comes a return to the opening subject. Except for the *Pastorale* and XI, even the sonatas without repeated first and second parts (II, V, VIII) contain recapitulations of the opening subject in the opening key.

No sonata contains any sharply enough defined subject matter after the opening to be called a second subject. The endings of first and second parts in bipartite sonatas I, IV, IX, X, XII, and XIII follow the Domenico Scarlatti rule by closely resembling each other (but not the endings in the other bipartite sonatas). Figures over the continuo accompaniment are notably sparse. What is written in the guitar part nearly always obeys what the continuo figures call for (exceptions: II, 4th system, 3rd meas.; VI, 8th, 3rd; VIII, 2nd, 2nd; XI, 8th, 1st and 2nd). Three exceptions call for a continuo dominant against a guitar $\frac{6}{4}$ chord.

When used, dynamic markings of *f* and *p* in IV and VI (*Pastorale*) apply to sequential chordal figuration ($\frac{7}{3}\frac{6}{4}$, $\frac{7}{3}\frac{6}{4}$, $\frac{7}{3}\#\frac{6}{4}$, $\frac{7}{3}\#\frac{6}{4}$, $\frac{7}{3}\frac{6}{4}$). In the *Pastorale*, *P.mo* (pianissimo) immediately precedes the section marked *Transp.do* (*transportado* = transposition of the section beginning in the 6th system, 7th meas.). The chordal vocabulary in XII (*Tiempo de minuete*) reaches an Italian augmented 6th (9th system, 6th meas.) at its most remote. None of the chordal vocabulary recalls modal usage. Whereas Santiago de Murcia in his *Passacalles y obras* (1732) still observed hallowed Spanish custom when he assigned all the items in a given *obra* = suite to *2.º tono* (fols. 75–82), *3.º tono* (82ᵛ–88), *5.º tono* (89ᵛ–95), *Sexto tono* (97–102ᵛ), *7.º tono* (103ᵛ– 109ᵛ), *8.º tono Natural* (110ᵛ–114), *Segundillo* (114ᵛ–119), or *7.º tono punto alto* (124ᵛ–128), the 13 sonatas here facsimiled eschew tones—just as surely as they depart from Santiago de Murcia's ciphered guitar notation.